

THE PARENT-FRIENDLY GUIDE TO READING COMPREHENSION

Practical ways to help P3 and P4 students understand stories and information texts, find answers and explain their ideas.

READ - THINK - PROVE - REVIEW

1

UNDERSTAND

The main skills children need for comprehension

2

SUPPORT

Simple prompts parents can use at home

3

PRACTISE

A short passage and parent answer guide

For parents and carers of P3 and P4 students

Suitable for home support alongside a Singapore-style primary English programme.

How to use this guide

A calm, simple routine for supporting reading at home

A child may read the words correctly but still need help understanding the story or information. Comprehension grows when children stop, explain ideas in their own words and point to clues in the text.

A simple four-step routine

1 READ	Read one short section or paragraph together.
2 TELL	Ask your child to explain what happened or what they learned.
3 FIND	Point to the word, sentence or picture clue that supports the answer.
4 CHECK	Make sure the answer is complete and matches the question.

What this free guide covers

- the main reading skills tested in P3 and P4 comprehension
- what to do before, during and after reading
- finding details, putting events in order and making simple inferences
- working out vocabulary and retelling the main ideas
- a short parent-and-child comprehension check with answers

WHY A FOCUSED GUIDE?

This free guide teaches the core habits that help children become thoughtful readers. A later paid Reading Comprehension Toolkit can add graded passages, targeted question practice, trackers and separate student and tutor files.

Contents

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Core skills	Before & during	Question types	Answering well	Practice	Answers & next steps

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What does reading comprehension measure?

Understanding is more than remembering isolated facts

03

P3 and P4 comprehension tasks usually combine several skills. A child may find a stated detail easily but need more support with sequence, feelings, reasons or writing a complete answer.

Five building blocks of understanding

Skill	What the child does	Parent-friendly question
Find	Locates information stated directly	Where does the text tell us that?
Order	Tracks what happened first, next and last	What happened before this?
Think	Uses clues to work out feelings or reasons	Which clue helped you decide?
Words	Uses nearby details to explain a word	What could this word mean here?
Answer	Writes a clear response to the exact question	Have you answered in a full sentence?

Three questions that reveal real understanding

1. What happened, or what information did the writer give?
2. Why did it happen, or how did the character feel?
3. Which word or detail helped you work that out?

THE PARENT-FRIENDLY PRINCIPLE

Ask one useful question at a time. Give your child time to think, then follow with: "What in the text helped you?"

A helpful distinction

Reading the words	Understanding the text
Accurate pronunciation	Explaining meaning
Reading at a steady pace	Retelling important events in order
Recognising vocabulary	Using context when a word is unfamiliar

Look, predict and prepare

A thirty-second preview can make the text easier

04

Before reading, children can use the title, pictures, headings and first sentence to prepare their minds. The aim is not to guess the whole story but to begin with a sensible idea.

The 30-second preview

1 LOOK	Notice the title, pictures, headings and type of text.
2 PREDICT	Say what the text may be about and give one reason.
3 CONNECT	Recall one useful fact, experience or related idea.
4 PURPOSE	Decide what to notice: characters, events, facts or instructions.

Useful parent prompts

- What do you notice first?
- What do you think this text may be about?
- Which word or picture gave you that idea?
- What should we look out for while reading?

PREDICTION IS NOT A TEST

A prediction can change after reading begins. Changing an idea because of new evidence shows that the child is thinking carefully.

Mini example

TRY IT TOGETHER

Title: The Surprise in the Lunchbox

Ask: What kind of surprise might appear? Which word makes you expect something unusual?

Read the first paragraph and decide whether the prediction still fits.

PARENT TIP

Keep the preview short and positive. The reading itself should provide the answers.

Keep track of meaning

Pause at useful moments - not after every sentence

05

Children can lose the meaning when they read too quickly or continue past a confusing part. Teach them to stop at the end of a paragraph and give a short update.

Four active-reading habits

Habit	What it sounds like	Why it helps
Pause	"What changed in this paragraph?"	Tracks the developing idea
Retell	"First this happened, then..."	Checks understanding in simple words
Picture	"I can imagine the noisy playground."	Builds a clear mental picture
Connect	"This happened because of the earlier problem."	Links parts of the text

Signs that meaning has been lost

- the child cannot say who or what the paragraph is about
- pronouns such as he, she, they or it are no longer clear
- events are retold in the wrong order
- an unfamiliar word blocks the whole sentence
- the child gives an answer based on memory rather than the text

A quick repair routine

STOP	Identify the exact sentence or word that caused confusion.
REREAD	Read the sentence before and after it.
SAY IT	Explain the sentence using easier words.
CHECK	Ask whether the paragraph now makes sense.

PARENT TIP

After each paragraph, ask: "Who or what was this about, and what new thing happened?"

Find the answer in the text

Literal questions still require careful reading

For a literal question, the answer is stated directly. The child must find the correct part, understand the question and use only the information needed.

A three-step method

1 KEY WORDS	Underline the important person, place, action or question word.
2 FIND	Scan the paragraph for the same idea, even if different words are used.
3 ANSWER	Write the needed detail in a complete sentence.

Common problems to notice

Problem	Example	Better approach
Copies too much	Copies the whole paragraph	Choose only the sentence or detail needed
One-word response	"Rain."	"The match stopped because it began to rain."
Misses part of question	Gives one reason when two are requested	Circle numbers and words such as both or two

TRY IT TOGETHER

Text: Sam carried an umbrella because the sky was dark and rain had begun to fall.

Question: Why did Sam carry an umbrella?

Strong answer: Sam carried an umbrella because it had started to rain.

PARENT TIP

Ask your child to point to the answer before writing it. This builds the habit of checking the text instead of guessing.

Feelings and reasons: use clues

07

Read between the lines without making a wild guess

Sometimes the writer does not name a feeling or reason directly. The reader uses a character's words, actions or body language to make a sensible conclusion.

The clue-to-answer method

TEXT CLUE	What did the character say, do or notice?
WHAT IT SHOWS	What does that action usually tell us?
ANSWER	Which feeling or reason fits the clue best?

Worked example

TEXT Ethan stood behind his mother and spoke in a tiny voice when the new coach greeted him.		
Clue	Reasoning	Inference
stood behind his mother	He wants safety or support	Ethan may feel nervous or shy
spoke in a tiny voice	He is not speaking confidently	The new situation makes him unsure

Common mistakes

- giving an answer that is possible but not supported
- choosing an answer that is possible but not supported
- copying the clue without explaining what it shows
- telling what may happen next instead of answering the question

PARENT PROMPT

"Which action or word helped you choose that feeling?"

Vocabulary from context

Use nearby words to work out the meaning

08

When a word is unfamiliar, children do not always need to stop immediately. The rest of the sentence may explain the word, give an example, show an opposite or reveal what happened next.

Four useful context clues

Clue	What to look for	Example
Explanation	The text tells what the word means	a habitat, or natural home, for animals
Example	The text gives examples	instruments such as drums and flutes
Opposite	A contrast gives a clue	unlike the noisy hall, the room was peaceful
Result	What happens next reveals meaning	the branch was weak, so it snapped

The try-a-word method

1 GUESS	Say the meaning in simple words using the sentence.
2 REPLACE	Try a familiar word in the same place.
3 CHECK	Read the sentence again. Does the new word make sense?
TRY IT TOGETHER Sentence: The timid puppy hid behind the chair when the visitors entered. Possible meaning of timid: shy or easily frightened. Check: "The shy puppy hid behind the chair" keeps the meaning.	
PARENT TIP Let your child make a sensible guess before checking a dictionary. The guessing process builds comprehension.	

Sequence, main idea and retelling

09

See how the parts of the text fit together

Children understand a text more clearly when they can identify the most important idea and retell events in the correct order without including every small detail.

Retell a story in three parts

Part	What to include	Parent question
Beginning	Main character, setting and starting situation	Who was involved and what began?
Middle	The main problem, change or important events	What problem happened and what did they try?
End	The solution, result or lesson	How did it finish or what was learned?

Useful sequence and cause words

Relationship	Clue words	Parent question
Sequence	first, later, meanwhile, eventually	What happened before and after this?
Cause	because, since	Why did this happen?
Result	so, therefore, as a result	What happened because of it?
Problem and solution	but, decided, solved, managed	What went wrong and how was it fixed?

Find the main idea

TOPIC	Who or what is the paragraph mainly about?
KEY POINT	What is the most important thing the writer says about it?
REMOVE	Leave out small examples, repeated details and personal opinions.
PARENT ACTIVITY After reading, ask your child to retell the text using only "At first... Then... In the end..."	

Write a complete, accurate answer

10

Understanding must be shown clearly on the page

Children sometimes know the answer but lose marks because they write too little, copy too much or forget part of the question. A simple routine can make answers clearer.

The FAR method

F - FIND	Find the exact clue or detail in the text.
A - ANSWER	Answer the question directly in a complete sentence.
R - REVIEW	Check names, tense, pronouns and every part of the question.

Match the answer to the mark value

Question value	Likely expectation	Useful check
1 mark	One correct detail	Have I given the exact information?
2 marks	Two details, or an answer plus a clue	Can I see two scoring ideas?
Longer response	A clear retelling or explanation	Are the ideas in the correct order?

Common-error clinic

Weak response	Problem	Improved response
"Scared."	Not a complete answer	"Ethan felt scared when he met the coach."
"Because the wheel."	The reason is unclear	"The trolley stopped because one wheel was locked."
Copies several sentences	Too much information	Choose the one detail that answers the question

FINAL CHECK

Ask: "Does this answer make sense by itself?" If not, add the missing person, action or reason.

Parent-and-child comprehension check

11

A short P3/P4 check - not a full diagnostic assessment

THE BOOK RETURN TROLLEY

The school library became very busy at lunchtime. Students left returned books on the counter, and Mrs Lee had to sort them after school. To make the job easier, the library team painted an old trolley purple and gold. A sign on the front said, "Returned Books Here."

On the first day, the trolley worked well until it stopped suddenly near the doorway. Two students pushed, but it would not move. Priya knelt beside it and noticed that one small lever pointed down. She remembered seeing the same kind of lever on her bicycle trailer. "I think the wheel is locked," she said. When Mrs Lee lifted the lever, the trolley rolled again.

A new problem appeared after lunch. Too many books had been piled on one side, so several slid onto the floor. Nobody was hurt, but the students realised that the trolley had been overloaded. They placed a basket on each shelf and made two shorter trips instead of one heavy trip.

By Friday, the counter was clear and books reached the correct shelves more quickly. Mrs Lee thanked the team, but Priya said the best part was not the tidy library. "We noticed each problem and changed our plan," she explained. The students decided to make a small checklist for the next group of library helpers.

Questions - 12 marks

1. Give two reasons the library team made the return trolley. (2)

2. What does "overloaded" mean in paragraph 3? (2)

3. How did Priya help solve the first problem? Give one clue from the passage. (2)

4. Why did the students make two shorter trips? (2)

5. What does Priya's final comment show the team learned? (2)

6. Retell the main events in one or two sentences. (2)

BEFORE MARKING

Ask your child to underline the clue for Questions 1, 3, 4 and 5. Discuss one answer that was easy and one that needed more thinking.

Answers, score guide and next steps

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Use the result as a starting point, not a final judgement

Suggested answers

1	The library was busy at lunchtime, returned books filled the counter, and Mrs Lee had to sort them after school. Award 1 mark for each valid reason.
2	Carrying or holding too many books, or having too much weight on it.
3	Priya noticed the lever pointing down and remembered a similar lever on her bicycle trailer. She suggested that the wheel was locked.
4	The trolley had too many books on one side and some fell off, so shorter trips made it safer and less heavy.
5	The team learned to notice problems, change its plan and improve after a mistake.
6	Accept an accurate retelling, e.g. The library team made a book-return trolley, solved a locked wheel and an overloading problem, and then created a checklist for future helpers.

A cautious score guide

Score	What it may suggest	Useful next step
10-12	Secure in this short check	Continue with varied stories and information texts
7-9	Developing	Revisit the question types linked to missed marks
0-6	Targeted support may help	Use guided reading practice or a fuller skills check

This six-question check is not a complete assessment. Performance can vary by text type, vocabulary, question wording, concentration and writing confidence.

The next step in the learning cycle

ASSESS	DIAGNOSE	LEARN	PRACTISE	REVIEW	IMPROVE
FREE GUIDES  Visit the resource library		WHATSAPP  +44 7362 587539		PERSONAL GUIDANCE Message Teacher Chris about suitable P3/P4 resources, professional marking and feedback, or 1-to-1 tutoring. Please include your child's year level and the reading skill they find most difficult.	

RESERVED FOR THE PAID READING COMPREHENSION EXPANSION

Graded fiction and non-fiction passages • targeted literal, sequence, inference and vocabulary practice • answer-writing support • progress tracker • separate student and tutor files • full answer guidance